

June 10, 1862.

Professor Busk, F.R.S., in the Chair.

Dr. Sclater exhibited, on behalf of Capt. J. W. P. Orde, F.Z.S., a specimen of a black variety of the Water-Vole (*Arvicola amphibius?*), also remarkable for its posteriorly elongated hairs and rather long tail, obtained in Argyllshire; and a Red-crested Duck (*Branta ru-fina*), shot January 1862 on a freshwater lake in the same county, where it was observed in company with Golden-eye (*Clangula glaucion*).

Dr. Sclater also exhibited some drawings representing the four generally recognized species of Wild Asses, and made some remarks on the geographical distribution and distinctive peculiarities of these animals, and on the specimens of them exhibited in the Society's Menagerie. The species, as commented upon, were as follows:—

1. *ASINUS HEMIONUS*, ex Asia boreali.

The Kiang or Tibetan Wild Ass, of which the Society had a fine female specimen in the Menagerie, presented by Major Hay in 1859*, seemed to be without doubt the true *Equus hemionus* of Pallas, and as such entitled to bear that name, as proposed to be restored to it by Dr. Gray in his 'List of Ungulata,' published in 1852.

2. *ASINUS INDICUS*, ex deserto Indico.

The Wild Ass of Cutch, of which the Society had in their Menagerie a single example, presented by Sir T. Erskine Perry in 1849, had been commonly called *Equus hemionus*. It was, however, obviously distinct from the Tibetan animal, but apparently hardly separable from the next species.

3. *ASINUS HEMIPPUS*, ex Persia et Syria.

Of this Ass, lately named *Asinus hemippus* by M. I. G. St.-Hilaire†, but which was probably the *E. onager* of Pallas, and seemed hardly different from the Indian animal, the Society possessed two specimens, both females. One of these was from Persia, having been presented by the Hon. Charles Murray in 1859‡, and represented

* See Proc. Zool. Soc. 1859, p. 353.

† Compt. Rend. xli. p. 1214.

‡ Mr. Murray has kindly furnished me with the following note concerning this animal:—"The Ghour or Kherdecht of the Persians is doubtless the Onager of the ancients. Your specimen was caught, when a foal, on the range of mountains which stretch from Kermanshah on the west in a S.E. direction to Shiraz. These are inhabited by several wild and half-independent tribes, the most powerful of which are the Buchtzari. The Ghour is a remarkably fleet animal, and moreover so shy and enduring that he can rarely be overtaken by the best-mounted horsemen in Persia. For this reason they chase them now, as they did in the time of Xenophon, by placing relays of horsemen at intervals of eight or ten miles. These relays take up the chase successively, and tire down the Ghour. The flesh of the Ghour is esteemed a great delicacy, not being held unclean by the Moslem, as it was in the Mosaic code. I do not know whether this species is ever known to

the "Ghour" or "Khur" of travellers in that country. The second was from Syria, having been presented by the late W. Burkhardt Barker, Esq., in 1854, and was of much interest as being, doubtless, of the same race as the "Wild Ass" of the Holy Scriptures.

4. *ASINUS TÆNIOPUS*, ex Abyssinia.

The only Wild Ass not represented in the Society's collection was that of Eastern Africa. It was curious that the only species of this section of the *Asini* which occurred in the African continent was that which approached most nearly to the Zebras in possessing a distinct dorsal cross, and in having the strongest indications of Zebra-stripes. Dr. Sclater had examined the animal in the Jardin des Plantes, which is mentioned in the 'Comptes Rendus' * by M. I. G. St.-Hilaire as the *Onagre d'Abyssinie*, and had obtained, by the permission of the authorities of that institution, an accurate drawing of it. The example in question had been transmitted to the Jardin des Plantes by M. Delaporte, French Consul at Cairo, and M. Degoutin, French consular agent at Massouah. The fact of Wild Asses being found in Eastern Abyssinia had long been well known. To the authorities mentioned by Mr. Blyth in his article on Wild Asses, in the twenty-eighth volume of the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (p. 229), might be added Leipsius†, as quoted by Dr. Wagner, and Mr. John Petherick, H. B. M. Consul at Khartoum, who noticed these animals in herds of from five to eight on the elevated sandy plains of Taka. But the animal now in the Jardin des Plantes was believed to be the first of this species brought to Europe.

This Wild Ass had also been obtained by Dr. Th. v. Heuglin during his last expedition to Eastern Africa, and had been described and figured in the twenty-eighth volume of the 'Acta Acad. Leopoldino-Carolinæ,' under the name *Asinus tæniopus*. There seemed every reason to believe that our domestic Asses were descended from this Abyssinian species.

The following papers were read:—

1. ON SOME NEW AND RARE BIRDS FROM NEW GUINEA. BY ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE.

(Plates XIX., XX., XXI.)

The birds now brought before the Society were collected by my assistant, Mr. Allen, on his last voyage. They comprise several in-

bray like the ordinary domestic Ass. Your animal, while under my care, used to emit short squeaks and sometimes snorts, not unlike those of a Deer; but she was so young at that time that her voice may not have acquired its mature intonation. I do not remember to have heard or read of this species braying, though the animal is frequently spoken of by Taverner, Porter, and all our travellers in Persia."—P. L. S.

* Comptes Rendus, xli. p. 1221.

† Briefen aus Aegypten, p. 154.